

Evaluation Methods

1. DEM will track the completion of each critical step. The Division currently plans to review basinwide plans and management strategies every five years following implementation. At that time modifications and additions will be made as necessary in the plans to provide continued water quality improvement and maintenance.
2. The basinwide comprehensive baseline data set characterizing the water quality and biological resources would be used to evaluate the success of management strategies. Limited degradation of the water quality and improvements in degraded waters would indicate successful management practices.

Costs and Economic Considerations

Program costs of this action are estimated at \$50,000 per year to fund an environmental planner with skills in modeling to work in DEM. This management action would result in an increase in water quality improvements achieved per dollar spent on the planning, administration, implementation, and monitoring of water quality programs. Improved coordination of activities to protect and restore water quality within each basin would allow geographical targeting of resources spent on environmental protection and identification of the most cost-effective control strategies, which in turn would result in cost savings to the public and private sectors. The development of a system for evaluating the impact of wetlands alterations on basinwide hydrology and water quality would allow those who administer wetlands permitting programs to consider the basinwide and cumulative impacts of permitting decisions. In addition, it would help decision makers to focus regulatory and mitigation efforts on those wetlands most important for water quality, and to channel and concentrate mitigation and protection efforts to areas where the need is greatest. By incorporating wetlands impacts into basinwide planning, government agencies, private firms, and individual landowners can better tell where development will be most compatible with protecting water and wetland resources. This reduction in uncertainty should lower the overall costs of the permitting process over time for both the public and private sector. Other benefits of deliberate, coordinated, and scientifically based wetlands management on a basinwide scale could include avoided, reduced, or postponed expenditures on flood control structures and waste treatment facilities. Planning allows local governments to assess the physical capacity of land in their jurisdiction and to plan ahead for the highest quality growth possible within the constraints of the natural resource base. At a regional level, planning maximizes the effectiveness of efforts to identify and protect habitats vital to wildlife, rare species, rare natural communities, and fisheries (see the Vital Habitat Section). Finally, this